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Especially for Homemakers

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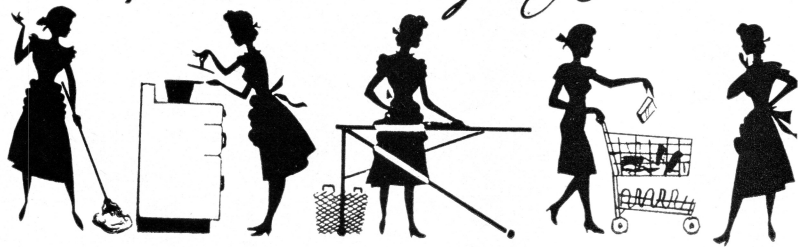
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Especially for...



HOMEMAKERS

Children and Group Activities: Where They Fit In

ALMOST EVERY Iowa family with children is involved with church, baseball, scouting, or similar activities this summer. Parents give many hours of time to the organizations that make these activities possible. Yet questions such as "What is my role as a parent when my children take part in activities?" or "Are activities important?" trouble some parents.

Parental Involvement

The family is the first and most important force that forms and maintains values and ideals for young children. This means that parent's attitudes toward activities will greatly affect what their children learn from activities. Parents *do* influence the meaning of activities for children. This is shown when they reward children for certain behavior and achievement and punish them for other behavior and lack of achievement.

Because parents help determine what activities mean for their children, they should examine frankly how they feel about the activities in which their children are participating.

Is the activity one that will help prepare your child for the kind of world in which he will be living? Or is the activity one in which you excelled, or wished to excel?

It is seldom, if ever, advisable for parents to re-live their own lives through their children. Is your child playing basketball because it meets his needs and interests? Or is he playing basketball because it is the family tradition? It is important that children learn that they are independent from the lives of their parents.

Because parents determine so much of the meaning activities have for children, it is quite important that both parents believe the activity is worthwhile. If *only one* parent supports an activity, children often are caught in tension at home. If one or both of the parents do not support the activity, the child may develop negative attitudes about the people and experiences of the activity.

The Adult World

Because our society continues to become more complex and life tends to be more complicated, there is a need to help children adjust to the environment outside their home. As a child enters public school, he is faced with three great forces.

First: he is pushed out into a larger physical world.

Second: He is pushed into the world of his peers.

Third: He is confronted with the world of adult language and logic.

Parents cannot protect their children from these forces of influence.

But they can approve certain activities that help children learn that their home life is like and yet different from life outside the family home. In this way, activities help children learn what is expected of them by the adult world.

Social Development

Children need to develop socially. Part of the child's social development comes from interaction with children his own age and with "significant others" like school teachers and group leaders. Children during their years of social growth are seeking to know who they are. Activities help them answer this by allowing them to learn, "This is what a scout is" or "This is what a Christian does."

Taking part in activities helps children learn what is right and what is wrong. More important, they learn how right and wrong is determined. Also, parents by rewarding and punishing behavior help children develop attitudes. These attitudes serve as the criteria by which goals and ways of behavior are determined.

Let us look at one example of a child and an adult interacting. See what you think takes place in this experience of a pre-schooler.

The nursery school teacher asked the four-year-old to pick up the wooden block he had knocked off the pile. She left that corner of the room. The boy took great pains in placing the block on the stack in line with all the other blocks.

Is there a value prompting this boy's behavior? Is he really striving for orderliness, or does he want adult approval?

Following are two pictures of children. Study them carefully. Can you tell what kinds of activities these children have experienced? Has the activity been a satisfying one?





Do you think the needs of these children have been met? Does your answer agree with your husband's?

If you feel the child's needs are met, why do you feel this way? If you feel the child's needs are not met, why do you think you feel this way? It is very important that we understand "how" we feel about our children and "why" we feel as we do.

Parent's Role: Be Perceptive

Parents can help children get the most out of their activities by:

1. Being available to listen,
2. Being tuned in to hear,
3. Sharing rather than quizzing.

There are problems involved with being perceptive to children. When a child is anxious or ready to talk, you may feel you're too busy to give him your attention. An inward reaction may be, "Oh not now, I'm too busy — later." Even if we don't say this aloud, the child gets the message.

It would be well to consider whether clean dishes or a clean house are more important than children. There may be one time in the day when your child feels most strongly the need to talk to his parents. To be sensitive at that time to the child's needs will help build a base for parent-teen relations in later years.

One young father noted his children were most willing to talk when they were about to settle down in bed for the night. By being sensitive to this, he was available when the children wanted to talk.

Being "tuned in" or really hearing what a child says takes a good lis-

tener. A good listener understands what the child is feeling, notes tone of voice, reactions and what is *not* said, as well as what is said. Often what is not said is most important. This means we listen for the "why" behind what the child is saying. This is no easy task.

If we question a child when he wants to talk, the questions may seem demanding and threatening. Instead of questions, we should learn to share experiences with the child. An example of this is the mother who asks the child as he comes in the door, "What did you do at school today?" The parent may ask such questions to learn if John's accomplishments in school were those that will hold the parent up to the community as the "successful parent." Or the parent may desire to share in the growth and development of his children. The child will know the difference.

If we desire to share, we let the child tell us when he is ready. For example, not many girls or boys like to answer a series of questions upon arriving home from a date. But during the following day or days, they may like to share some of the experiences.

Parents are responsible for the activities of their children. But parents should not force activities upon their children. Activities should be viewed as one of the important bridges between the home and the adult world. Wise parents help their children select the best bridges and then help them cross into the world of adults.

George H. Preston, in his book: *Substance of Mental Health*, put it well when he stated "... If you train a child properly, you should lose him. Then your job is done, and done well."

—STEVE BOLLMAN
Human Development
and Family Relations
Specialist

To College on Credit: Will It Work?

"Buy now — pay later" is a familiar theme. "Learn now — pay later" is not as readily accepted. While families are willing to buy televisions, cars and houses on credit, they often are slow to consider

loans in financing a college education.

College costs need not necessarily bar anyone from attending if the student has the ability to do college work. A recent survey shows that two-thirds of the students hoping to go to college do not have enough money for college expenses.

Many will need financial help. Working in the dining hall or similar campus positions may not be practical or possible for many students. Jobs are scarce and often low-paying. At the same time, scholastic pressures are demanding more of the student's time.

Scholarships have been increasing in number and amount. However, not all needy students receive them. And the amount of money given is seldom sufficient to cover the basic expenses of a college education. All colleges and universities have some funds for this purpose. They also administer loan plans such as the Student Loan Program of the National Defense Educational Act.

Under the National Defense Educational Act, students may borrow \$1,000 a year up to a total of \$5,000. Interest is not charged until one year after graduation or when the student withdraws from college. If the borrower becomes a public school teacher, up to 50 percent of the loan and interest can be cancelled at the rate of 10 percent a year.

Loans are usually made directly to the student, not his parents. If his grades are above "C," scholarship is usually not considered when deciding who will receive a loan. This gives the "A" student and the "C" student an equal chance.

On the average, parents pay for about 50 percent of a student's college expenses. About 12 percent comes from loans and scholarships. And the remainder comes from savings and student's earnings.

Information concerning scholarships and loans can be received by writing the Financial Aid Adviser of any college or university. He also will have information about costs for his particular school.

—FRANKIE SCHWENK
Home Management Specialist